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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 003053

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/21/2016

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SUBJECT: AUGUST 18 MEETING BETWEEN IRAQI PM, AMBASSADOR,
AND MNF-I CG

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Daniel V. Speckhard for Reasons 1.4 (b)
) and (d).

11. (S//REL GBR AUS) SUMMARY: At an intense August 18 meeting with Prime Minister Maliki, MNF-I Commander General (CG) Casey and the Ambassador, the PM reacted negatively to American news reports that the PM is willing to kill Sunnis, but shield Shia including Moqtada al-Sadr from MNF-I raids. The PM said that his objection is not to the targets of the attacks, but to their impact on reconciliation and MNF-I's methods, which he believes involve considerable collateral damage. The CG briefed on the success to date of the Baghdad Security Plan (BSP). END SUMMARY.

PM Impressed by Iraqi Special Operations Forces (ISOF)

12. (S//REL GBR AUS) On August 18, the Ambassador, CG Casey, and Pol-Mil Counselor (notetaker) attended a briefing at the Prime Minister's Residence. The PM expressed his appreciation for the training of the Iraqi Special Operations Forces (ISOF). In his estimation, 60,000 ISOF would be equal to four times that number of regular Iraqi Army forces. The PM wants the ability to order the ISOF on important counter-terrorism missions.

BSP - The Difficulty will be to Sustain Progress

13. (S//REL GBR AUS) General Casey then gave his briefing on the Baghdad Security Plan (BSP) Phase II. The PM remarked that the people of the Doura area of Baghdad, where the "clear" phase of the BSP had been completed, were very happy with the peace and security there. Other areas are eagerly waiting for their turn, he said. The Ambassador reported his conversation with a district leader in Doura, who noted that 900 tons of trash had been hauled away, and that merchants were able to reopen their shops. He added that the Iraq Reconstruction Management Office (IRMO) and USAID had allocated \$200 million to promote economic activity in the cleared areas of Baghdad. General Casey noted that as Phase II expands, the challenge will be for Iraqi forces alone to maintain security of the cleared areas.

PM Denies "Attack Sunnis and Shield Shia" Charge

14. (S//REL GBR AUS) Turning to "politics," the PM said he has heard that American media is reporting that the Prime Minister orders attacks on Sunnis but shields Shias, and this causes frustration among the American military. He claimed that MNF - I has reported this to Washington. General Casey noted that the PM had rejected five MNF-I requests for operations, all against Shia targets in densely populated Sadr City. The PM had been concerned that those operations

could impact his reconciliation efforts and that innocent people would be killed, especially if the MNF-I operation involved tanks or aircraft. Firmly rejecting charges of ethnic bias, the PM asserted that he will detain any person of any ethnic origin. For example, earlier this week a Shia militia group occupied Karbala public offices, and he ordered the Iraqi Army to attack this insurgent group - even though Karbala is home to a major Shia shrine. The stories imply that he shields the Sadr's Jaysh al-Mahdi (JAM) to protect the Shia from the Sunnis. This is false -- he wants to get rid of the JAM. He intends to surround Sadr City, and pressure Moqtada there and pressure the Shia in Basrah. In fact, Iraqi National Intelligence Service (INIS) Chief Shawani told him of a JAM plot to assassinate him in Najaf, and he was forced to cancel a trip. The PM urged General Casey to continue to propose operations, but to try to plan them with a lower profile. (NOTE: In an earlier meeting discussing MNF-I tactics, the PM had suggested that the Saddam Hussein's low key "snatch and grab" tactics were what he has in mind. END NOTE.)

General Casey - Iraqi Sovereignty Respected

15. (S//REL GBR AUS) General Casey responded that contrary to what the PM had seen from the U.S. media, he had in fact told President Bush that as the leader of an independent Iraq, the Prime Minister has the right to exercise sovereignty. While he is sure that some American military officers in MNF-I are frustrated with the PM's decisions, there are certainly also those frustrated with some of the CGs decisions as well. He gives military advice and does not make political judgments. In conclusion, he cited an American saying - "don't take political advice from a soldier, and don't take military

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advice from a politician." The PM had a good laugh, and the meeting ended on a lighter note.
SPECKHARD